

FEB 01 2017

Edwards,Michelle**CITY CLERK**

From: Benjamin Kite [benjamin.kite@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 01, 2017 9:35 AM
To: Azar, George; DeBaun,Curtis; Morris,Don; Auler,Amy; Elliott,Earl; Nasser,Karrum;
Nation,Todd; Garrison,Neil; Crossen,Martha
Cc: Edwards,Michelle
Subject: Casinos are no solution
Attachments: Casinos Fail Old Industrial Towns.pdf; ATT00001.txt

Good Morning,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am sure you all appreciate brevity, so I will try to be succinct: in my view, Terre Haute is already in a precarious financial position and a casino will only exacerbate that situation. We are near full employment, so we really don't need new entry-level jobs, we need high-quality jobs with employers willing to "train and retain" rather than treating workers as "human resources".

The research I have seen on casinos of this kind reveals that the majority of the profits for the casino will come from the citizens of this county and those profits will not stay in the county – quite contrary to what the PR from the gambling industry seems to suggest. Independent research also suggests that a casino in Terre Haute will only increase addiction, domestic abuse, prostitution and human trafficking. Perhaps this is the reason we need to double the size of our jail. I've heard the defense that the increase is minimal and that it's worth the trade off – what amount of human trafficking is "worth the trade off"? In my view, any increase is unacceptable.

I'll note that there are a lot of citizens who feel the same way and I don't think that they are feeling very heard. What we see instead is city and county officials one by one stepping forward to bless this proposal – and why? Who prompted them to do so?

I think it would be a very good idea for the common council to host a well-publicized public forum where we can discuss these issues together. At the very least, it's essential that an impact study (and I mean a study, not a PR package paid for by the gaming industry) to assess whether this endeavor is really the benefit it purports to be or whether – as described in the article attached here about Bethlehem, PA – this is one of the worst things we could do for our community.

THE BLOG

Casinos Fail Old Industrial Towns

11/14/2014 12:31 pm ET | Updated Jan 14, 2015



Like 2

Peter Van Buren 

Author of the forthcoming "Hooper's War," "Ghosts of Tom Joad: A Story of the #99Percent" and "We Meant Well"

It wasn't just a business, it was a way of life— what residents of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania referred to simply as "The Steel"— a mill once America's second largest steel producer with 31,500 souls working in a single facility.

The Mill

The mill made the steel for the Empire State building and the Golden Gate Bridge, and for WWII warships. After cheap imports flooded the United States in the 1980s, the Bethlehem Steel facility closed, leaving behind a mile-long scar of rusted out buildings people call the brownfields, along the Lehigh River. *Allentown*, Billy Joel's bitter saga of industrial decline, name-checked the town.

The Promise of Legalized Gambling

So as soon as Pennsylvania legalized casinos in 2004, Bethlehem scrambled for one of the first, and won. Symbolically, Las Vegas' Sands corporation would build right on top of the old mill. Everyone hoped the casino would replace a decent portion of the jobs lost when The Steel left. But by 2014, there were only [2,200 positions](#) at the casino, plus 700 at leased businesses inside. Was a casino really the answer?

Even those new jobs didn't come for free. Roads, some [\\$10 million](#) worth, had to be built or repaired to make it easier for out-of-towners (New York is only 75 miles away) to reach the casino. The city added to its police force. Since the casino was located outside the downtown business district, the city paid for a shuttle bus to try and draw players to their shops. But the casino had its own retail mall competing with anything local. No one should "plan on a casino to bring about urban renewal," [said](#) a Wynn Casinos property manager in nearby Philadelphia, "because that's not what casinos

TRENDING

Why Trump Won't Serve
His Full First Term

Yes, Kellyanne Conway
Actually Said This...

This Artist Sent Her
Painting To The New
Yorker On A Whim. Now
It's The Cover.

The Inevitability Of
Impeachment

do.”

The House Always Wins

Still, there was money to be made in Bethlehem. [Casino profits](#), of course, were repatriated to the owners in Las Vegas. Pennsylvania requires casinos to pay a 55 percent tax on revenues, but only four percent of that goes to the host community. For Bethlehem in 2013, that totaled [\\$9.5 million](#), not game-changing money for an area so economically devastated for so long. [Baltimore](#), an early adopter of casino gambling as an economic resurrection strategy, has seen similar results. In Atlantic City, the first major destination outside Las Vegas to feature legalized gambling, [four](#) major casinos [closed](#) in the past year.

Bringing in a casino is about jobs and money. Jobs [created](#) statewide in Pennsylvania via gaming do not even equal the number lost in Bethlehem alone. As of 2013, Pennsylvania casinos directly employed only [17,768](#) people, leaving significant questions about the role of gaming in lifting America’s devastated rust belt towns out of unemployment-driven malaise.

As for money, a [report](#) notes that after some initial successes, revenues in Pennsylvania from gaming declined by 2013. Statewide, casinos did contribute about \$81 million in taxes last year. However, it is unclear how much of the revenue behind those taxes came from local residents, what might be called churning rather than creation, a back-door tax on those ill-prepared to lose money at the slots ([affluent](#) people visit casinos less often than poorer people do.) One group of frequent visitors who have found a way to beat the house come from New York’s Korean community; they sell the promotional [meal vouchers](#) from the casino on the black market.

Competition is a serious problem, as [new casinos](#) open in surrounding states. For example, New Jersey is considering a casino at the Meadowlands, only [30 minutes](#) outside New York City, which will pull many away from Bethlehem’s new bright lights. Pennsylvania is also among the states with the highest casino tax rate in the nation, raising further the question of market cannibalization should gaming corporations seek out lower rates in adjoining states. Casino revenues nationwide have not recovered their 2007 peaks, and [Moody’s](#) projects a drop through 2015, cutting industry earnings by as much as 7.5 percent.

Don’t Gamble if You Can’t Afford to Lose

Only a generation ago, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania had a steel mill employing tens of thousands of people at good wages. Including benefits, an average union steelworker made [\\$26.12](#) per hour then, the equivalent of [\\$40.66](#) today. It was enough to create one of the most powerful economies on earth, supported by a robust middle class driving demand for housing, cars, everything. They could afford to gamble a bit on yearly vacations, too.

The typical casino worker today in Bethlehem makes [\\$10-12](#) an hour. Many are part-

Barb From ‘Stranger Things’ Was Unrecognizable At The SAG Awards

TMZ

Trumps and Obamas Trigger Real Estate Boom in D.C. Neighborhood

SUBSCRIBE TO & FOLLOW THE MORNING EMAIL

The Morning Email helps you start your workday with everything you need to know: breaking news, entertainment and a dash of fun. [Learn more](#)

✉ Newsletter

address@email.com

[Subscribe Now](#)



95.8 K



467 K



Podcast

Add us on Snapchat

time. They labor in the shadow of the mill that helped build the Empire State building and the Golden Gate Bridge, a new way of life that may flounder on a bad roll of the dice.

Follow Peter Van Buren on Twitter: www.twitter.com/wemeantwell

More: [Casino](#) [Bethlehem](#) [Deindustrialization](#) [Gambling](#) [Pennsylvania](#)

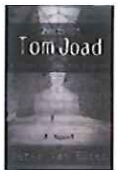
This Blogger's Books and Other Items from...

[amazon.com](#)



We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People (American Empire Project)

by Peter Van Buren



Ghosts of Tom Joad: A Story of the #99 Percent

by Peter Van Buren

FROM OUR PARTNERS

Presented by LendingTree

Transfer your debt to a card with 0% APR for up to 21 months

Vets could receive up to \$42,000 with these amazing benefits

4 cards with jaw-droppingly long 0% intro APR

Fastest way to pay off \$10,000 in credit card debt

Refinancing can save money, but not for long

Rates dip to 3.2% APR (15 yr). See if you're eligible

SUGGESTED FOR YOU

[POLITICS](#)

[WEDDINGS](#)

[ENTERTAINMENT](#)

[HEALTHY LIVING](#)

[STYLE](#)

HUFFPOLLSTER: The First Ratings For Donald Trump's Presidency Are Out

Girlfriend Turns Life With Her Boyfriend Into Ridiculously Cute Comics

Azealia Banks Defends Donald Trump's Travel Ban, Tells Rihanna To 'Shut Up'

Turmeric May Not Be A Wonder Spice After All

What Melania Trump's Inaugural Ball Gown Designer Has To Say For Himself

WHAT'S HOT

ENTERTAINMENT

POLITICS

MEDIA

ENTERTAINMENT

Here's The Real Reason For
Winona Ryder's Many Faces At
SAG Awards

10 Concrete Ways To Take Action
Against The Muslim Ban

Trump Supporters'
#BoycottStarbucks Attempt
Backfires Spectacularly

Winona Ryder's Facial
Expressions Stole The Show
During David Harbour's Amazing
SAG Speech

ENTERTAINMENT

STYLE

WORLDPOST

POLITICS

Plot Twist: James Marsden Has
A 15-Year-Old Son, And They
Look Exactly Alike

This Close-Up Video Of Pore
Strip Removing Blackheads Is
Disgustingly Mesmerizing

U.S. Commando Dies In Yemen
Raid That Kills Around 30 People

Protests Against Trump's
Executive Order Don't Let Up

[Advertise](#) [RSS](#) [Careers](#) [FAQ](#)

[User Agreement](#) [Privacy](#) [Comment Policy](#) [About Us](#) [About Our Ads](#) [Contact Us](#) [Archive](#)

Copyright © 2017 TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. "The Huffington Post" is a registered trademark of TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. All rights reserved.

Part of HuffPost Impact